

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 0660

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, UR, US
SUBJECT: SAKHAROV'S CONCERN OVER METRO EXPLOSION

REF: MOSCOW 615

1. SUMMARY. ON THE MORNING OF JANUARY 14, ANDREY SAKHAROV CALLED AT THE EMBASSY AND WAS RECEIVED IN THE CONSULAR SECTION BY EMBOFF FOR A CONVERSATION LASTING SOME NINETY MINUTES. SAKHAROV STATED THAT HIS MAIN PURPOSE IN COMING WAS TO EXPRESS CONCERN OVER THE SIGNIFICANCE AND POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF THE RECENT EXPLOSION ON A METRO TRAIN. HE REGARDED THIS EVENT AS PROBABLY A KGB PROVOCATION AIMED AT GENERATING PUBLIC INDIGNATION AGAINST DISSIDENTS, DISCREDITING THE DISSIDENT MOVEMENT, AND THUS ALLOWING THE AUTHORITIES WIDER LATITUDE IN ACTING AGAINST IT.

2. HE DESCRIBED HARASSMENT EXPERIENCED BY MEMBERS OF HIS FAMILY, AND EXPRESSED PARTICULAR CONCERN OVER POSSIBLE OFFICIAL ACTIONS AGAINST HIS SECRETARY ALEKSANDR GINZBURG AND HIS SON-IN-LAW YEFREM YANKELEVICH. SAKHAROV ALSO COMMENTED ON THE STATUS AND FUTURE PROSPECTS OF THE SOVIET DISSIDENT MOVEMENT AND ROLE THE NEW U.S. ADMINISTRATION CAN PLAY IN SUPPORTING
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THE CAUSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE USSR. END SUMMARY.

3. AT HIS REQUEST, ANDREY SAKHAROV CALLED AT THE EMBASSY ON JANUARY 14 AT 1000 AND HAD A DISCUSSION WITH EMBOFF LASTING ABOUT NINETY MINUTES. (SAKAROV PHONED THE EMBASSY THE PREVIOUS EVENING AND STATED THIS DESIRE TO COME IN, EITHER SAME EVENING OR JANUARY 14. AFTER

CONSULTATION, EMBOFF TOLD SKHAROV TO CALL AT CONSULAR SECTION NEXT DAY, WHERE HE WAS IN FACT RECEIVED).

4. THE CONVERSATION, IN RUSSIAN, WAS WIDE RANGING. BUT AT OUTSET, SAKHAROV STATED THAT HIS MAIN PURPOSE IN COMING WAS TO EMPHASIZE AND MAKE KNOWN HIS CONCERN ABOUT THE SIGNIFICANCE AND POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF THE EXPLOSION WHICH OCCURRED RECENTLY IN THE MOSCOW METRO. ON JANUARY 13, HE HAD GIVEN FOREIGN JOURNALISTS THE TEXT OF HIS STATEMENT ON THIS SUBJECT.

5. SAKHAROV'S DISCUSSION OF METRO EXPLOSION IN GENERAL FOLLOWED SUBSTANCE OF HIS WRITTEN STATEMENT. IN HIS VIEW (AS IT EMERGED DURING DISCUSSION):

--METRO EXPLOSION WAS IN ALL PROBABILITY A KGB PROVOCATION;
--THIS EXPLANATION IS SUPPORTED BY PUBLICITY GIVEN CASE BY AUTHORITIES, AND ESPECIALLY BY QUICK REACTION OF VIKTOR LOUIS IN PUBLISHING ARTICLE IMPLICITLY PINNING RESPONSIBILITY ON DISSIDENTS;
--OTHER EXPLANATIONS ARE EITHER WHOLLY IMPROBABLE (THAT EXPLOSION WAS INDEED TERRORISTS ACT BY KNOWN DISSIDENT) OR MUCH LESS LIKELY (THAT IT WAS ACT OF UNBALANCED PERSON, OR, SAY, GEORGIANS).

6. IN DISCUSSING IMPLICATION OF ACT AS KGB PROVOCATION, SAKHAROV MADE FOLLOWING POINTS:
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--KGB IS QUITE CAPABLE OF ACTION RESULTING IN INNOCENT VICTIMS.
--DURING RECENT PERIOD, A NUMBER OF DISSIDENTS DIED VIOLENTLY UNDER SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES. SPECIFICALLY, HE MENTIONED BOGATYREV; DISSIDENT BAPTISTS BIBLENKO, KHMARA AND MOISEYEV; THE JURIST YEVGENIY BRUNOV WHO WAS APPARENTLY THROWN OFF A MOVING TRAIN; THE LITHUANIAN CATHOLIC TAMONIS, ALLEGEDLY A SUICIDE; A LITHUANIAN KINDERGARTEN TEACHER WHO WAS KILLED BY ASSAILANT ON STREET AFTER HAVING BEEN WARNED AGAINST GIVING RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION TO CHILDREN; AND OTHERS.

--AFTER LINKING EXPLOSION WITH DISSIDENTS, AUTHORITIES NOW WAITING TO ASSESS BOTH FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC REACTION;
--BY THEIR OWN ACTIONS, AUTHORITIES HAVE GENERATED MOMENTUM REQUIRING FURTHER STEPS: AN INVESTIGATION, ARREST OF SUSPECT, CAMPAIGN OF DENUNCIATION, AND TRIAL.

AUTHORITIES CANNOT LEAVE A TERRORIST ACT UNSOLVED AND UNPUNISHED.

7. SAKHAROV LATER CONCEDED THAT ARREST AND TRIAL OF KNOWN DISSIDENT(S) WOULD BE BOTH EMBARRASSING AND COUNTERPRODUCTIVE FOR AUTHORITIES. HE ALSO CONCEDED THAT MORE PLAUSIBLE SCENARIO WOULD BE TO CHARGE SOMEONE WHO COULD BE REPRESENTED AS HAVING FLEEN UNDER PERNICIOUS INFLUENCE OF DISSIDENT IDEAS. IN FACT, SAKHAROV CITED AS PRECEDENT CASE OF VANDER LUBBE, WHO WAS CHARGED BY NAZIS FOR SETTING REICHSTAG FIRE. AUTHORITIES COULD THUS DISCREDIT DISSIDENTS AND GENERATE PUBLIC INDIGNATION AGAINST THEM (INSIDE USSR IF NOT OUTSIDE) WHILE HOLDING NEGATIVE EFFECTS TO TOLERABLE LIMITS, AND THEN PICK DISSIDENTS OFF ONE BY ONE WITHOUT INCURRING DOMESTIC NEGATIVE REACTION.

8. IN ANOTHER CONTEXT (DURING REFERENCE TO LEADERSHIP
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TRENDS) SAKHAROV SPECULATED THAT METRO EXPLOSION MAY ALSO BE "ECHO" OF LEADERSHIP STRUGGLE, IN SENSE THAT IT COULD BE EXPLOITED BY "CONSERVATIVE" LEADERS IN MANEUVERING AGAINST MORE "LIBERAL" COLLEAGUES AND IN URGING THAT BREZHNEV CRACK DOWN ON DISSIDENTS.

9. SAKHAROV DID NOT APPEAR CONCERNED FOR HIS OWN SECURITY, BUT DID DESCRIBE CONSTANT HARASSMENT AGAINST HIMSELF AND MEMBERS OF HIS FAMILY, AS WELL AS GRAVE CONCERN FOR STATUS OF HIS SECRETARY, ALEKSANDR GINBURG, AND OF HIS SON-IN-LAW YEFREM YANKELEVICH:

--DURING SEARCH OF GINZBURG'S APARTMENT, "EVERYTHING" WAS REMOVED, INCLUDING GINZBURG'S PERSONAL FUNDS, A 5,000 RUBLE "SOCIAL FUND" MAINTAINED BY SAKHAROV TO ASSIST POLITICAL PRISONERS, AND A SAVINGS ACCOUNT BOOK BELONGING TO SOLZHENITSYN'S WIFE. (ACCORDING TO SAKHAROV, GINZBURG HAD A "POWER OF ATTORNEY" OVER THIS ACCOUNT);

--YANKELEVICH HAS BEEN SUMMONED (BUT DOES NOT INTEND TO GO) FOR A MEDICAL EXAMINATION, WHICH SAKHAROV FEARED COULD BE A PRELUDE TO AN ATTEMPT TO HAVE YANKELEVICH DECLARED MENTALLY ILL (HE SUFFEREDS FROM A BAD STUTTER). SAKHAROV EXPRESSED THE FERVET HOPE THAT YANKELEVICH WOULD SOME DAY BE ABLE TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY AND TO ACCEPT AN APPOINTMENT WHICH HE HAD BEEN OFFERED SOME TIME AGO BY MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY;

--AMONG THE HARASSMENTS HE AND HIS FAMILY HAVE EXPERIENCED, SAKHAROV DESCRIBED AN APPARENT ATTEMPT TO BLACKMAIL HIS WIFE. ONE SEMEN ZLOTNIK (SAKHAROV

EXPRESSED DOUBT THAT SUCH A PERSON ACTUALLY EXISTS)
SENT LETTERS TO HER FROM VIENNA CLAIMING TO BE A NEPHEW OF A MAN
WITH WHOM YELENA BONNER WAS ALLEGEDLY INTIMATE DURING
WORLD WAR II, AND DEMANDING LARGE SUMS OF MONEY.

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10. FUTURE TRENDS IN DISSIDENT MOVEMENT. SAKHAROV
DID NOT VIEW DISSIDENT MOVEMENT AS LIKELY TO BE PERMANENTLY
WEAKENED BY CURRENT WAVE OF REPRESSION, EMIGRATION AND
EXPULSION. THE VACANCIES LEFT BY DEPARTING DISSIDENTS
WOULD BE FILLED BY OTHERS AS THEY HAVE BEEN IN THE PAST.
THOSE WHO LEAVE WILL HELP THE CAUSE BY THEIR WORK ABROAD.
THE CONDITIONS WHICH CREATE DISSIDENTS WILL REMAIN
AND GUARANTEE THE APPARANCE OF NEW ONES. HE SIGNLED
OUT THE GROWING DISSATISFACTION OF WORKERS AS A TREND
WORTH WATCHING. SOVIET WORKERS, OF COURSE, WERE NOWHERE
NEAR STAGE REACHED BY POLISH WORKERS, EITHER IN ORGANIZATION
OR IN CLEAR PERCEPTION OF THEIR GROUP INTERESTS. EVENTUALLY,
SAKHAROV HOPED, INTERESTS OF SOVIET WORKERS AND INTELLIGENTSIA
COULD RESULT IN A RELATIONSHIP OF MUTUAL SUPPORT. AT THE
SAME TIME, SKHAROV RECOGNIZED THAT THE SOVIET REGIME WAS
"VERY STRONG" AND ENJOYED A WIDE MEASURE OF POPULAR AC-
CCEPTANCE. HE DID NOT WANT TO SEE IT WEAKEDN OR TO ENCOURAGE
POLITICAL INSTABILITY. ALL THAT HE WANTED, HE SAID, WAS
FOR THE REGIME TO BECOME MORE HUMANE. HE SAW THE BEST LONG
TERM HOPE FOR CHANGE AND IMPROVEMENT IN THE
HISTORIC RUSSIAN TENDENCY FOR REFORMS TO COME
FROM THE TOP. IN THIS CONTEXT, SAKHAROV
SPOKE ABOUT THE "BREZHNEV ADMINISTRATION" (HIS
WORDS) IN SURPRISINGLY RESTRAINED LANGUAGE,
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CHARACTERIZING IT AS A PERIOD WHEN SOVIET SOCIETY WAS SLOWLY RECOVERING ITS EQUILIBRIUM AND RETURNING TO RELATIVE "NORMALCY" AFTER A LONG HISTORY OF TRAUMATIC EVENTS. HE ADMITTED THAT HE DID NOT KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT "AFTER BREZHNEV."

11. HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE NEW U.S. ADMINISTRATION. THE QUESTION WHY SOVIET AUTHORITIES WERE MOUNTING A CAMPAIGN AGAINST DISSIDENTS AT THIS PARTICULAR TIME-- INCLUDING METRO AFFAIR WAS A POSSIBLE PROVOCATION -- LED TO HIS RUMINATING ABOUT THE U.S. PRESIDENTIAL TRANSITION AS POSSIBLE EXPLANATION: DURING PRESENT PERIOD, OUTGOING ADMINISTRATION IS NOT IN A STRONG POSITION TO ACT DECISIVELY, WHILE INCOMING ADMINISTRATION IS NOT YET IN POWER--AND WHEN IT DOES ASSUME POWER, IT WOULD HAVE OTHER MATTERS TO THINK ABOUT, AND WOULD, MOREOVER, SEEK INITIALLY TO GET RELATIONS WITH SOVIETS OFF TO A GOOD START. BUT SAKHAROV EXPRESSED BELIEF THAT LONG-TERM POLICY OF CARTER ADMINISTRATION ON ISSUE OF HUMAN RIGHTS WOULD BE A DECISIVE FACTOR IN U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS, AND ONE WHERE THE NEW ADMINISTRATION WOULD HAVE SOME FREEDOM TO PROBE AND PUSH SOVIET AUTHORITIES TOWARD BETTER PERFORMANCE IN MEETING THEIR HELSINKI FINAL ACT OBLIGATIONS. HE CONCEDED THAT SOVIET PATIENCE IS NOT UNLIMITED AND CONFRONTATIONS OF JACKSON ADMENDMENT VARIETY SHOULD BE AVOIDED--BUT THAT, NEVERTHELESS, THE COMPELLING NEED OF THE USSR TO IMPROVE ITS ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY AND TRADE DOES PROVIDE THE U.S. AND OTHER SIGNATORIES OF THE FINAL ACT WITH OPPORTUNITIES TO PROVIDE VITAL ASSISTANCE TO CAUSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN SOVIET UNION.

12. HELSINKI GROUP. IN CONCLUSION, SAKHAROV EXPRESSED HOPE THAT DOCUMENTS ISSUED BY ORLOV'S HELSINKI GROUP WOULD BE INTRODUCED AND CONSIDERED OFFICIALLY AT THE BELGRADE MEETING ON THE HELSINKI FINAL ACT. HE INDICATED LIKELIHOOD

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THAT THE GROUP WOULD ISSUE ADDITIONAL MATERIAL FOR CONSIDERATION IN BELGRADE. THE GROUP, HE ADDED, WAS SCHEDULED TO HAVE A PRESS CONFERENCE (JANUARY 14) ON MATTERS HAVING NO CONNECTION WITH THE METRO EXPLOSION.

13. WHEN SAKHAROV ARRIVED AT THE EMBASSY, HE WAS MET AT ENTRANCE BY CONSULAR OFFICER WHO ESCORTED HIM INSIDE WITHOUT INTERFERENCE FROM ILITIA, WHO WERE PRESENT IN NORMAL

STRENGTH. WHEN SAKHAROV PREPARED TO LEAVE, EMBOFF ASKED WHETHER HE WISHED TO BE ACCOMPANIED FOR ANY DISTANCE. SAKHAROV DECLINED, SAYING HE HAD CAR WAITING OUTSIDE. EMBOFF ESCORTED HIM TO STREET AND WATCHED HIM DISAPPEAR BEHIND CARS PARKED IN FRONT OF EMBASSY. EMBASSY ARCHWAY LEADING TO CONSULAR ENTRANCE WAS RINGED BY HEAVY MILITIA CONTINGENT PLUS SEVERAL PLAINCLOTHESMEN, ONE OF WHOM APPEARED TO BE CARRYING RADIO. THEY DID NOT, HOWEVER, MOVE AFTER SAKHAROV.

14. COMMENT. AS WE HAVE RECENTLY REPORTED, NONE OF THE UNOFFICIAL SOVIET SOURCES WE HAVE SEEN SINCE THE JANUARY 8 METRO EXPLOSION AGREES WITH SAKHAROV'S THESIS THAT THE KGB ITSELF SET OFF THE BOMB. IT SEEMS TO US HIGHLY UNLIKELY THAT THE KGB, WITH ALL OF THE RESOURCES AT ITS COMMAND, WOULD RESORT TO SUCH AN EXTREME MEASURE IN ORDER TO SET THE STAGE FOR A CRACKDOWN AGAINST DISSIDENTS. AT THIS POINT, WE HAVE CONFLICTING EVIDENCE ON WHETHER THE KGB WILL ATTEMPT TO CONNECT THE EXPLOSION WITH SPECIFIC SOVIET DISSIDENTS: VIKTOR LOUIS' ARTICLE SUGGEST THIS MAY BE IN THE WORKS; BOB TOTH'S PRAVDA SOURCE (MOSCOW 0519) FLATLY DENIED THIS POSSIBILITY. IN ANY EVENT, SAKHAROV CLEARLY BELIEVES THAT WESTERN PUBLIC OPINION IS CAPABLE OF FORESTALLING KGB REPRESSION OF DISSIDENTS, AND WE ARE INCLINED TO VIEW HIS UNUSUAL VISIT TO THE EMBASSY AS MOTIVIED BY HIS DESIRE TO DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO ENSURE THAT THE SITUATION AS HE SEES IT IS KNOWN IN THE WEST, AND PARTICULARLY IN THE U.S. IN THIS CONFIDENTIAL

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LIGHT, SAKHAROV'S WRITTEN STATEMENT TO THE WESTERN PRESS CORPS HERE, AND HIS ORAL STATEMENTS TO US, MAY UNDERSTANDABLY HAVE BEEN SHADED TOWARD THE DRAMATIC IN ORDER TO EVOKE MAXIMUM CONCERN.
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Message Attributes

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Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
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